

Current Economic Programs Printed Survey Results: by the *New Residential Construction* Statistics Users Respondent Base

U.S. Census Bureau
Current Economic Statistics User Survey

OMB CQM-26 (Rev.5/5/98)

I. DATA CONTENT

Your answers identifying the survey data you use will help us understand our users' patterns of data use.

1. Which Current Economic Statistics from the Census Bureau do you use? (Mark all that apply.)

(1) Monthly

0.0%;	0	None
57.7%;	127	Retail Sales
39.1%;	86	Wholesale Trade
45.0%;	99	Manufacturing/Trade Inventory/Sales
87.3%;	192	Housing Starts
81.8%;	180	Building Permits
80.0%;	176	New Home Sales
75.5%;	166	Value of New Construction Put in Place
68.2%;	150	Housing Completions
58.6%;	129	Expenditures for Residential Improvements
100.0%;	220	New Residential Construction
40.0%;	88	New Mobile Home Placements
40.0%;	88	Monthly Imports and Exports
40.9%;	90	Current Industrial Reports
43.6%;	96	Manufacturers' Shipments, Inventories, Orders

Replies 220; Forms 220

(2) Quarterly

50.6%;	45	Quarterly Financial Report
84.3%;	75	Current Industrial Reports
9.0%;	8	Federal Assistance Awards Data System
19.1%;	17	Quarterly Tax Survey
10.1%;	9	Quarterly Public Employee Retirement

Replies 89; Forms 220

(3) Annual

50.0%;	102	Annual Retail Trade
40.7%;	83	Annual (Wholesale) Trade
19.6%;	40	Annual Survey of Communications
22.5%;	46	Transportation Annual Survey
25.0%;	51	Service Annual Survey
52.9%;	108	County Business Patterns

31.4%;	64	ZIP Code Business Patterns
36.3%;	74	Statistics of U.S. Businesses
54.4%;	111	Characteristics of New Housing
68.6%;	140	Annual Building Permits
52.5%;	107	New Residential Construction in Selected Metropolitan Areas
30.4%;	62	Annual Capital Expenditures
49.0%;	100	Annual Survey of Manufactures
41.7%;	85	Current Industrial Reports
12.7%;	26	Research and Development Survey
27.5%;	56	Plant Capacity Utilization
8.3%;	17	Education Finance Survey
13.2%;	27	State Tax Collection Survey
6.9%;	14	Annual Public Employee Retirement
11.3%;	23	Annual Survey of Public Employment
11.3%;	23	Consolidated Federal Funds Report
21.1%;	43	State Government Finances
32.8%;	67	Annual Imports and Exports

Replies 204; Forms 220

II. DATA DELIVERY

The Census Bureau is considering use of the Internet as the primary method of data delivery. By completing the following questions, you will help us retain the most essential delivery formats and design the best possible data delivery service.

(4) 2. How do you receive current economic data now? (Mark all that apply.)

89.9%;	196	Printed Publications	17.0%;	37	FAX
75.2%;	164	World Wide Web (Internet)	10.1%;	22	Direct (E-mail) delivery
31.2%;	68	CD-ROMs	1.8%;	4	Regular mail
25.7%;	56	Diskettes	11.0%;	24	Other

Replies 218; Forms 220

-
- visit to Census release library and requests to commerce library.
 - Newspaper
 - Economic Bulletin Board
 - News Services such as Bridge.
 - tape (CPB)
 - Electronic "Bulletin Boards"
 - Check values by telephone
 - also use microfiche in some cases.
 - time-share vendor (private)
 - Economic Bulletin Board-Commerce Dept.
 - Analytics
 - News Services-Market News.
 - DRI DATABASE
 - Internet, ProNet
 - Individual sources using census bureau data
 - sec,Secondary Vendor (R
 - Newswires
 - Intermediate Data Vendor.3,4,6,
 - Stat-USA
 - Phone calls
 - Overnight Delivery of NIA data
 - CD Rom & Publications in Library

- By phone to construction statistics
- Subscribe to America Statistical Index on Microfiche
- STAT-USA+WEFA Group

(5) 3. What format do you PREFER when downloading data for further manipulation? (Mark all that apply.)

68.6%;	140	Spreadsheet (e.g., wkl, xls, etc...)
30.4%;	62	Database (e.g., dbf, mdb, etc...)
28.4%;	58	ASCII delimited
18.6%;	38	ASCII flat files
15.7%;	32	Retrieve from print or screen and enter manually
12.7%;	26	Do not manipulate data
2.9%;	6	Other

Replies 204; Forms 220

- TSO files
- acrobat
- Access database
- Text files: txt. or PRN
- Word Document

4. What capabilities do you want on the Census Internet site? (For each line, indicate the degree of your preferences, from 5 [high] to 1 [low].)

(6) a. Direct (E-mail) delivery:

43.2%;	82	5	20.0%;	38	3	8.9%;	17	1
16.3%;	31	4	6.3%;	12	2	5.3%;	10	Don't know

Replies 190; Forms 220

(7) b. E-mail notification:

45.5%;	85	5	18.2%;	34	3	8.0%;	15	1
15.5%;	29	4	9.1%;	17	2	3.7%;	7	Don't know

Replies 187; Forms 220

(8) c. Retrieve/display to screen:

58.3%;	109	5	11.8%;	22	3	7.5%;	14	1
16.0%;	30	4	0.5%;	1	2	5.9%;	11	Don't know

Replies 187; Forms 220

(9) d. Search:

69.3%;	138	5	10.1%;	20	3	2.0%;	4	1
14.6%;	29	4	1.0%;	2	2	3.0%;	6	Don't know

Replies 199; Forms 220

(10) e. Download complete data sets:

71.5%;	138	5	6.2%;	12	3	3.1%;	6	1
15.5%;	30	4	0.5%;	1	2	3.1%;	6	Don't know

Replies 193; Forms 220

(11) f. Download selected data:

73.0%;	146	5	6.0%;	12	3	1.0%;	2	1
15.5%;	31	4	2.0%;	4	2	2.5%;	5	Don't know

Replies 200; Forms 220

(12) g. Software help/tutorials:

20.3%;	37	5	28.6%;	52	3	11.0%;	20	1
18.7%;	34	4	14.8%;	27	2	6.6%;	12	Don't know

Replies 182; Forms 220

(13) h. Publication-quality printing:

31.2%;	59	5	18.5%;	35	3	12.2%;	23	1
21.2%;	40	4	12.7%;	24	2	4.2%;	8	Don't know

Replies 189; Forms 220

(14) i. Charts and graphs:

29.7%;	57	5	19.3%;	37	3	12.5%;	24	1
20.3%;	39	4	14.6%;	28	2	3.6%;	7	Don't know

Replies 192; Forms 220

(15) j. Geographic maps:

30.2%;	57	5	16.4%;	31	3	12.7%;	24	1
23.8%;	45	4	11.6%;	22	2	5.3%;	10	Don't know

Replies 189; Forms 220

(16) k. Other, please specify:

70.6%;	12	electronic bulletin board	29.4%;	5	Other
--------	----	---------------------------	--------	---	-------

Replies 17; Forms 220

- Publications like QFR to be in spreadsheet format or mdb for easy data manipulation after downloading.
- Dowlad selected data set according to state, regions, & metro areas
- ACROBAT FILES, which you may include in item h.
- As many items in pdf format as possible = 5
- Update full report at release time

(17) I. Electronic Bulletin Board (To collect write-ins)

33.3%;	1	5	0.0%;	0	3	0.0%;	0	1
33.3%;	1	4	33.3%;	1	2	0.0%;	0	Don't know

Replies 3; Forms 220

III. DATA USAGE

Your answers describing how you use the data will help us design the most effective Current Economic Statistics retrieval tool.

(18) 5. Do you combine/compare/merge data from more than one source listed in Question 1?

21.9%;	46	No	78.1%;	164	Yes
--------	----	----	--------	-----	-----

Replies 210; Forms 220

(19) 6. What time periods do you consider when using these data? (Mark X all that apply.)

65.4%;	140	5+ years	46.7%;	100	trends up to 1 year
61.7%;	132	trends up to 5 years	0.0%;	0	Other
54.2%;	116	latest 1 or 2 periods			

Replies 214; Forms 220

(20) 7. How do you use the data? (Mark all that apply.)

48.8%;	104	Create value-added products/services
40.4%;	86	Perform patron/client inquiries
32.9%;	70	Inform marketing decisions
24.4%;	52	Republish in newspaper/journal
23.0%;	49	Inform investment decisions
20.2%;	43	Store reports/printouts for archival purposes
7.5%;	16	Locate new sites
0.5%;	1	Other

Replies 213; Forms 220

- Store data in database.
-

(21) 8. What explanatory information do you consult when using these data? (Mark all that apply.)

75.2%;	158	Definition of terms
60.5%;	127	Narrative text describing survey results
59.5%;	125	Sampling and estimation methodology
42.9%;	90	Survey design
10.5%;	22	None
1.4%;	3	Other

Replies 210; Forms 220

- frequency and availability
- Direct contact with Census analysts
- Comparisons to earlier surveys and/or similar data from other agencies--e.g. census to BEA in one estimates.

(22) 9. Do you have any pressing data or information needs that are not currently being met?

- We are very much interested in unadjusted counterparts of tables 7 & 8 of the FT900 release being made available on internet on the day of release. Publications like QFR also need to be made available in spreadsheet or mdb for us to further manipulate data.
- No. Increasingly more and more data sets are becoming available electronically-which makes our work easier by eliminating manual inputting of data.
- Regional retail sales estimates (cancelled after 1996)
- Non-residential building permit data.
- State/MSA non-residential construction data!
- Yes--Need more timely and more defined (i.e.4-digit SIC code) SUB-NATIONAL data.
- Find it difficult to get info a local area ie. N.E., Urban, but not specific such as New York. Also, like annual building Permits in greater detail to states or county level.
- Monthly RetailSales is no longer in print-- it is time consuming to get it off the internet because of the download time. It's a waste of valuable research time.
- Retail Trade Monthly - Regional Data Survey - Blue Pages, Building Permits - Non-Resident & Additions.
- I do not receive all the requests all the time.
- Monthly commercial building permit statistics for Putnam Co. New York.
- Apartment (Multi-Family) Statistics.
- Information on nonresidential construction.
- Data on residential construction; alterations, renovations and conversions; and county level mobile home shipments.
- No.
- New remodeling data from American Housing Survey.
- Nonresidential Construction Dollars by STATE Highway Expenditures by STATE data has to be timely.
- MCD Business Patterns, Massachusetts is doing away with county government, MCD income estimates.
- Non-residential building permits--number by type of building.
- The availability of Residential and Commercial Building Permit Data.
- We use and would like to continue to use retail sales by county data and the merchandise line sales data.
- Int'l trade data on internet are inadequate. Only press releases are there. When data are revised, if data are not in the press release, there is no way to get the revisions (ex: monthly data from exhibits 6&7 of FT900).
- We really just want to get the monthly statistics listed in Question #1 timely-- the day they are released/announced to other new agencies.
- Better capital expenditure data and Better motor vehicle data.
- More timely data.
- Commercial building permits.
- Data on non-residential construction.
- Local U.S. MSA & county data.
- 1) NAICS to harmonized code concordance. 2) Timely plant capacity utilization at greatest detail level possible. 3) Windows version import data/monthly annual easy to use historical with full detail. 4) New Home sales (without land).
- Yes--Commercial building permits--Bring them back now!!!
- Commercial Building Permits for MSA's. This program was discontinued by the Census a couple of years ago.
- YES! Bring back non-residential state/local permits authorized! This was a severe loss for interpreting local economic trends. Also, more geographic detail, more frequently.
- Wish you were more current...
- Some data are not historical enough. Most of the time, I need data as far back as 20-30 years ago.
- Monthly Retail Sales for U.S. Metropolitan Areas.
- current retail sales
- Purchase costs of machinery, furniture, fixtures and other equipment by major SIC Code shown on a per square foot of occupancy.

- Pollution abatement expenditures by SIC
- 1). Employment in types of projects, such as residential construction. 2). Construction productivity measures.
- Commercial & industrial building permit activity!
- I would like housing start data broken down to each state.
- Better categorization of Import/Export information. It is very difficult to determine how much of some of our products were imported or exported.
- Non-residential construction that was deleted from current const. series.
- Want monthly retail trade by state & MSA back.
- Non-residential Building permits.
- Housing stats and completions by state, MSA Value of construction put-in-place by stats, MSA
- Yes, Non-residential permits and regional retail sales.
- Place and regional economic data sets in relation to population/race trends.
- Yes, but this will always be the case!
- Expenditures for non-residential construction, especially non-residential reconstruction.
- Make data reports easier to print off of the web.
- Average expenditures per residential improvement project for single family homes by region. Average value for residential permits by region.
- Move capital expenditure data--more frequent, more detailed
- Website is extremely difficult to navigate.
- Non-residential permits!!
- The annual survey of manufacturers needs to be in ASCII or pdf format; as well as pdf. We spend too many hours re-entering the data.
- Need detailed PPI data.
- Non-residential new construction and renovation
- We would like to see more economic data and analyses at the state & MSA level.
- MSA retail sales
- Monthly service sector sales counterpart data to retail, wholesale, and manufacturing shipments.
- Permits for remodeling and non-residential construction.
- The more history, the better.
- Commercial, Industrial, and other non-residential construction put-in-place!
- Immediate posting of data revisions when significant revisions are undertaken.
- Non-residential construction data outside California! Bring it back!
- Data at the metropolitan area level, e.g. retail sales, commercial building permits (office, industrial, retail).
- We have a need for long historical time series and for long-term forecasts.
- Timely business indicators for MSA's.
- Commercial Building Permits County level on a timely basis.
- Census bureau data by county: retail sales, housing starts, manufacturing stats, imports/exports, new home sales.
- Non-residential building permit data collection should be restored by state and metro area!
- Commercial building permits, Commercial real estates sales.
- As a foreign academic library, we are concerned about cost of access.
- Estimates of coverage by county for building permits better state and local data.
- Report on production of industrial fabrics
- Yes-I need non-residential construction series (commercial, industrial, etc.) on a geographic basis--as used to be done!
- Very disappointed that non-residential building permit data is no longer being tracked--our models rely on this!
- Building Permit data are not as complete as before - Rental vacancy rates & rental would be helpful.

IV. INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION ISSUES

We will soon begin restructuring the Current Economic Surveys based on the new North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Your answers will help us ensure that these surveys continue to provide the economic information needed by markets, policy makers, and business people. For more information on NAICS, see the Bureau's web site: <http://www.census.gov/NAICS>.

(24) 10. At what levels of detail do you MOST FREQUENTLY USE industry data classified by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)? (Mark all that apply.)

62.0%;	127	4-digit industries (or maximum detail I can get)
40.0%;	82	Sector totals (SIC division); e.g., Manufacturing or Retail Trade
37.1%;	76	2-digit major groups
36.1%;	74	3-digit industry groups
13.7%;	28	NA (don't use SIC-based data)
3.9%;	8	Other

Replies 205; Forms 220

- digit SIC product codes
- 7-digit in some cases
- The greatest level available--CIR level. Product level.
- I don't use this much, but others in the agency do!
- UP TO 8-DIGIT
- 6-digit product data
- D & B's 2+2 system 8 digits
- Use SIC categories extensively

(25) 11. Were you aware that the SIC system is being replaced by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)?

26.8%;	56	I was unaware of this
32.1%;	67	I am partially aware, but lack details
41.1%;	86	I am aware and understand some implications

Replies 209; Forms 220

12. Would you like to receive more information about NAICS?

(26) Yes, please send me - (Mark all that apply)

90.8%;	129	A brochure that explains NAICS	29.6%;	42	Conference announcements
62.0%;	88	NAICS implementation plans	2.8%;	4	Other

Replies 142; Forms 220

- Send info on NAICS comparability with existing SIC data.
- Contacted by local information office fo Bureau.
- I already have the CD

(27) No Thanks -

66.7%;	48	I will check the Census Bureau's web site (www.census.gov/naics)
33.3%;	24	I don't need more information about NAICS

Replies 72; Forms 220

V. USER PROFILE

Please tell us about yourself so we may serve you better.

(28) 13. Type of organization.

50.2%;	109	Business	5.1%;	11	Association
19.8%;	43	Government	2.8%;	6	Individual
13.4%;	29	Academic/Research	3.2%;	7	Other
5.5%;	12	Media			

Replies 217; Forms 220

-
- Information and consulting firm
 - Consulting
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Building Material Manufacturer
 - Consultant
 - Library (University)
 - Corp. Library
-

(29) 14. Do you work in your organization's library?

28.1%;	59	Yes	71.9%;	151	No
--------	----	-----	--------	-----	----

Replies 210; Forms 220

(30) 15. What is your affiliation with the Census Bureau?

76.2%;	160	None	1.9%;	4	Census Information Center
8.1%;	17	State Data Center	1.0%;	2	Affiliate
3.8%;	8	Business/Industry Data Center	9.0%;	19	Other

Replies 210; Forms 220

-
- State Government Agency.
 - Special Sworn Employee
 - Federal User
 - City Government
 - Cooperator in disseminating permits authorized data
 - Affiliate Agency
 - Government
 - Depository
 - Affiliate Data Center
 - DOC Staff
 - Heavy user
 - GPO Depository
 - Local Census Affiliate
 - Trade Association
 - Building Permit Depository
 - Associate Data Center
 - They do work for our Division
 - Consumer of housing data
 - Federal Depository Library
-

(35) 20. May we contact you to follow up on this questionnaire?

77.6%; 156 Yes

22.4%; 45 No

Replies 201; Forms 220

(36) Question 21. Remarks:

- It would be nice to have all reports available in spreadsheets format. For any publication reports that contain large tables and data, mdb file format would be an ideal too.
- We greatly appreciate this survey. I'd like to stress one major concern we have: As you move toward complete Internet delivery of data--please continue to publish "hard copies" of the economic reports for us to compare as backup. We have noticed that occasionally there are errors in Electronic Bulletin Board and Internet files--so we rely on the hard copy as backup. We use it as a safeguard. Thank you and feel free to contact me at your convenience.
- The computerized data is fine when you know exactly what you want. It is not so good when you want to know what is available and related information; in this case the printed publication e.g. Census of Manufactures, is far superior.
- The library relies heavily on Census data but we have a need for the information in both printed and downloadable (manipulable) formats. The library would purchase both the printed format as well as subscribe to the census website.
- The Bureau of the Census has done a great job with its web sites. With the exception of some unpublished data, everything is available through the internet. The unpublished data is received by direct e-mail.
- A published paper version should always be made available for purchase to the public. Information being available on the internet is nice, yet it is a completely different animal than having a hard copy version of the information. An example: I can receive my news off the internet, but I still prefer to get my newspaper in the morning for reading at my leisure away from a computer.
- When is 1997 Census to be available? Please keep as much of the data in print as possible--
Thanks!
- Census bureau data is always helpful--the data you provide enhances our publication and enables readers to make informal business decisions.
- --But please ask for Deborah Foster.

Thank you.

- The data we are interested in is housing stats, retail sales, etc. For the Jackson, Tenn., area. We compare those with previous months & years and with national averages.
- You have set up an excellent web site that is easy to use, fast and usually supplies me with the information I'm seeking.
- Thank you for your great service!
- I prefer e-mail contacts rather than phone, as I am frequently not available at my phone for extended periods.
- We serve a varied clientele (academic, business, government, and private citizens) and work across many subjects. Census data are absolutely vital to us. Our biggest need is for more geographic area detail more frequently (state, county, place, if possible). Users often do not understand the 5 yr. gaps and lag time for the major Economic Surveys that offer such detail, much less the 10 yr. decennial cycle. The internet is a great help in speeding "publication", but we find access is not yet universal. We still download and print entire documents for guide reference and historical purposes. I am concerned about just how long the electronic media will remain accurate and usable as technology changes. How will the Bureau deal with these problems?
- I prefer retrieving info from your web site. I particularly like documents in pdf format because they look nice & are easy to use. Output can be ported directly to reports already in progress.
- The property and casualty Insurance Industry has a growing need for statistics on the cost of purchasing machinery, equipment, furniture and the cost of installing fixtures and improvements and betterments as a tenant. This is needed by industry groups (e.g., plastic workers; accounting firms, lawfirm, etc. This need will help the consumers properly insure their property to avoid penalties and take advantage of guaranteed replacement cost coverages. Do you have anything like that?

- Respondent provided voluminous, illegible comments throughout that could not be deciphered to record.
- Sorry for the delay--the survey didn't arrive until 8/12/98.
- PDF files are big and we have to retype the data for analysis. Having raw or spreadsheet/database data would save us much time. BLS's web site is a good one to study.
- I think that this user survey is an excellent idea; you should poll users periodically.

I would be happy to participate in a users' panel or advisory group.

- We look forward to working with you on the upcoming Census.
- Be sure that all information is made available in the most "user-friendly" manner possible!!
- Tables which have no column headings and which one must consult separate documents are highly confusing.
- I always use your data for the economic releases. My major concerns are: timeliness of data availability on web and being able to print the data from the web without having to reformat printing fonts. I also to the revisions when they come out, but often the location and structure of the revisions is confusing.
- Current setup on the web is extremely frustratingly for someone trying to print/download data and reports

-> Make .XLS files available with lots of historical data.

Use .PDF filrds for pasting your releases -Having to flow ascii into a word processor and reformat is not the way to go. Email sub would be helpful

- The web site is generally very helpful a lot of information-sometimes difficult to locate information wanted.
- Would be helpful if classes were offered in best techniques when seeking govt. data on the Web.

Location on Web tha would state what media given U.S. Govt. was available in (papers, Internet, etc.)

- I think the advancements on the Web over the past few years have been excellent. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has put much of this data in raw form on their FTP site. I'd like to see the Census Bureau make the FTP site more accessible and have more information.
- I find the Census Website to be fairly difficult to use. It's hard to find information that I need. For example: I was trying to find tables on the number of Households & spent probably 45 minutes locating it.
- I work as a local government long range planner. My duties include socio-economic analysis as requested by the public, politicians and officials. The Census Bureau's Web Site is one of my key resources.
- We love the Census Bureau! Clear publications indices and ease of search engines on the Internet site are very important to us. Also, choice of how to download data is good, not all users need or can use spreadsheet software.
- Keep up the good work. I appreciate this survey.
- More documentation and instructions for obtaining data from gohper directories would be helpful.
- Keep up the good work.
- Please provide me with the description of the monthly and annual products listed on the front page.
- If feasible, include columns heading names (labels) in spread sheets, as well as row labels. Not now done in monthly building permits diskettes and STF3-A CD-ROM, for example.
- It was a mistake to exclude mobile home permits from your residential permits totals, and a bigger mistake to exclude the non-residential permits.
- Good to see this survey! Dealing with you via the Internet and mail is going well. However, trying to reach people ove rthe phone is still a major headache.
- Glad more of your publications are being made available on the Intenet! Suggestion for format of employment data-group by years first, then industry. Is there some alternative for obtaining non-residential building permits.

Figure 1: